LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

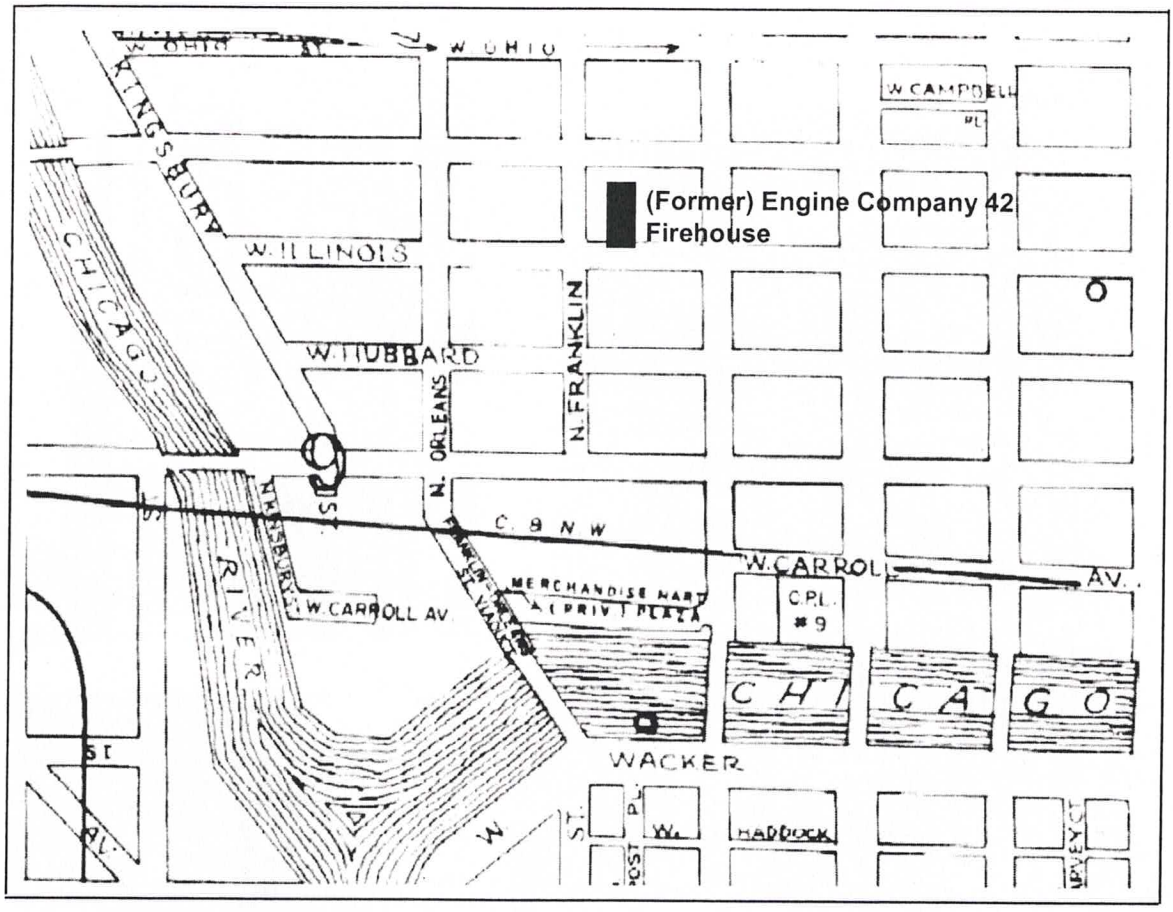
(Former) Engine Company 42 Firehouse

228 W. Illinois St.

Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, October 4, 2007

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Arnold L. Randall, Commissioner



Cover: The (Former) Engine Company 42 Firehouse as it appears today (left). Historic photographs show the firehouse in 1920 (top right) and in 1929 (bottom right).

Above: The firehouse is located at 228 W. Illinois St. in Chicago's Near North Side.

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. It is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, entire or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, Illinois 60602; (312-744-3200) phone; (312-744-2958) TTY; (312-744-9140) fax; web site, http:www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

(Former) Engine Company 42 Firehouse

228 W. Illinois Street

Built: 1887
Architect: Unknown

This distinctive former firehouse, located on the Near North Side of Chicago, was constructed in 1887 to house Engine Company 42 of the Chicago Fire Department (CFD). Built during a period of rapid expansion of the CFD, the firehouse reflects the growing City's commitment to the health and safety of its citizens. The three-story, single-bay firehouse is distinguished by an exceptionally intact "storefront," ornamented with elaborate wood trim, incised metal piers, and rusticated stone base, and upper stories that feature fine brickwork accented with limestone. Through its history and architectural design, this historic firehouse, together with twelve other Historic Chicago Firehouses (designated as Chicago Landmarks in 2003), conveys the changing and evolving ideas about the firehouse and fire protection in Chicago over time.

A discussion of the historical and architectural significance of Chicago's historic firehouses is contained within the "Historic Chicago Firehouses Landmark Designation Report," adopted in 2003 by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks. This report is attached to and incorporated herein.

History of (Former) Engine Company 42

On March 31, 1888, the Fire Department organized Engine Company 42 and appointed Michael Ehret as the First Captain. The Company was assigned to operate out of the newly-constructed firehouse located at 228 W. Illinois Street (then known as 77 E. Illinois Street). Construction of the firehouse and establishment of Company 42 reflects the rapid growth of the Chicago Fire Department at the close of the 1800s. Acquisition of new equipment, the construction of firehouses, and the increase in personnel defined this era as the Department strived to serve a booming city in the aftermath of the Chicago Fire of 1871.

According to the 1878 Report of Fire Marshal Mathias Brenner (Chief Fire Marshal from 1873-1879), the Department occupied thirty-four buildings and its force numbered 338 members at that time. An inventory of the Department's equipment included: thirty-three steam engines, five chemical engines, nine hook and ladder trucks, over thirty hose carts and carriages, several supply trucks and wagons, over 35,000 feet of fire hose, 151 horses, 466 automatic signal stations and thirteen alarm bells. The Department's resources were stretched to the limit to keep with the demands of the City, and consequently an ambitious expansion plan was implemented in 1879 when Denis J. Sweenie was appointed Chief Fire Marshal.

Under the command of Fire Marshal Sweenie, the Department grew to become one of the largest fire departments in the United States at that time, necessitated by the rapid expansion of the City. In 1889 Chicago nearly quadrupled in size, growing from 43 to 168 square miles, due to the annexation of the townships of Hyde Park, Jefferson and Lake, and the city of Lake View. To absorb this enormous territory, the Fire Department incorporated the existing firehouses and equipment of those areas while constructing new facilities where necessary.

Firehouses, including the firehouse at 228 W. Illinois, were also constructed near the Loop to serve to the factories, warehouses, and over-crowded working-class settlements surrounding Chicago's downtown. From the time of its organization in 1888, Engine Company 42 would serve the Near North Side from this firehouse at 228 W. Illinois St. for the next eighty years. Throughout its service, the firehouse also housed Squad 1 from March 3, 1928 to August 29, 1931, later returning on August 1, 1963. The purpose of the squad was to provide additional manpower support and specialized tools to the Engine Company.

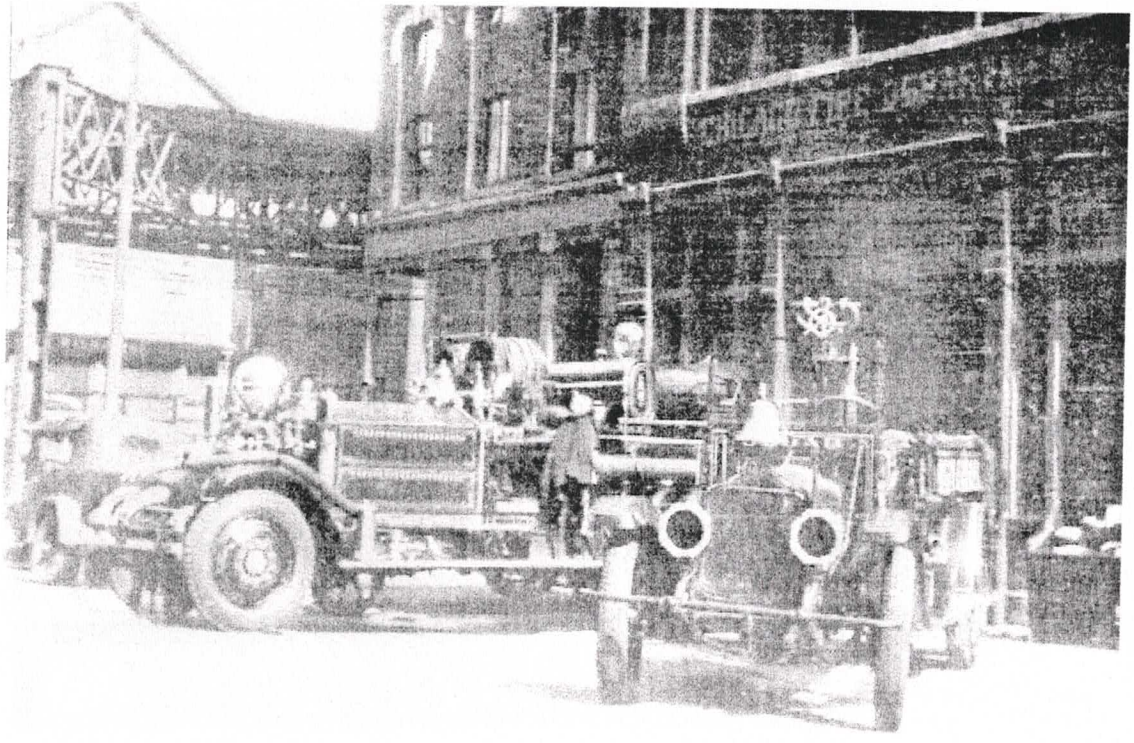
The Engine Company itself was temporarily relocated to 202 E. Chicago on December 13, 1964, because of an extra alarm fire at the neighboring building on Illinois Street. This large fire required the assistance of additional fire companies and created dangerous conditions at the firehouse. The firehouse was decommissioned by the Fire Department on November 1, 1968, and Engine Company 42 was relocated to a newer firehouse at 55 W. Illinois.

Building Type and Style

Historically, the size, design and character of a firehouse was shaped by the equipment it housed. The former firehouse at 228 W. Illinois St. was designed in the tradition of Chicago's

The Former Engine Company 42 Firehouse as it appeared in 1920 (left). The firehouse was constructed in the so-called "Storefront" style and originally accommodated horse-drawn equipment.

In the early 1900s the fire department began making the transition from horse-drawn to automobile-driven apparatus. Engine Company 42's 1928 Ahrens-Fox D-150 and Squad 1's 1922 White C-18 are seen parked in front of the firehouse in 1929 (below).



The front façade of the firehouse is characterized by its simple, distinctive ornament and fine brickwork. The crisp symmetry of the firehouse's overall design extends from its base to its roofline.

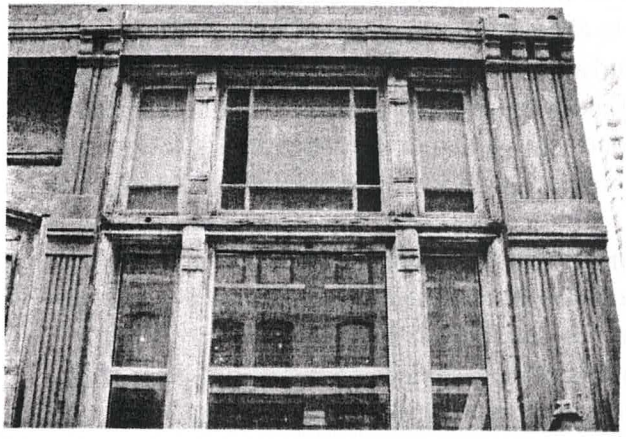
earliest firehouses—simple, functional structures built to accommodate horse-drawn equipment. The exterior of this three-story structure was designed to reflect the character of neighboring commercial buildings and features a single apparatus door (equipment entry) flanked by a personnel entrance. Firehouses designed in this manner have been referred to as having a "storefront" style because their simple massing and first-floor entrances resemble a store's entry and shop window on the ground floor.

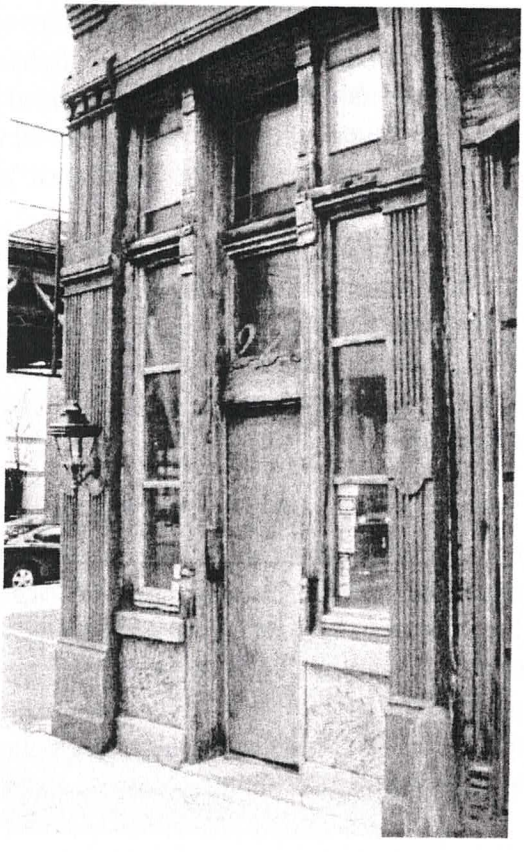
While the overall design of this former firehouse is rather utilitarian in nature, its street façade is characterized by its simple, distinctive exterior ornament and fine brickwork on its upper stories. The three-story building with one bay is built of load-bearing construction and features a floor plate measuring approximately 27 feet by 88 feet. Considering that most firehouses of this period were built to two stories, the three-story construction of this firehouse is indicative of the space required to house the manpower needed to serve such a densely populated area of crowded tenement housing, industrial plants and commercial buildings.

The front facade of the firehouse features a wood-and-metal "storefront" set atop a rusticated stone base. The storefront is framed by incised cast-iron piers and is topped by a cast iron spandrel that extends across the façade and visually defines the ground floor. Another set of cast-iron piers accent the equipment bay, which is the central focus of the building at street level. (Historic photos show that the original doors of the bay have been replaced and that transom windows above the bay have been removed to allow for the opening of the bay to be enlarged.) A personnel entrance flanked by sidelights and a transom is situated to the west of the bay, and a simple double-hung window surrounded by sidelights and a transom provides a near mirror image to the east. Finely-detailed original wood trim surrounds the door and window and frames the transom windows imparting a "storefront" quality to the ground floor of the firehouse.

The entire façade is characterized by its symmetry, which extends from the engine bay through the two slender piers that begin midway through the second floor, up to the roofline. The piers support the parapet, which originally featured a central corbelled brick knee-wall flanked by crenellated piers at each corner. (The knee-wall and the crenellated brickwork at the corners have since been removed. However, corbelled brickwork located beneath the parapet wall remains.)

The slender piers also emphasize the window divisions of the second and third floor, which consists of a central double-hung window flanked by a pair of double-hung windows on either side. The third floor features shallow brick arches that rest on delicately scalloped limestone lintels that cap the window openings (which have been infilled with brick) below. Other finely crafted features include heavy buttressing piers on either end of the façade that contain three recessed brick decorative rectangles each and are topped by a diamond-shaped terra cotta medallion. The ornamentation applied to the firehouse is uniquely delicate and confined mostly to the skillful execution of brickwork, making its appearance very unique.





The front facade of the firehouse features a exceptionally intact wood-and-metal "storefront" set atop a rusticated stone base. Substantial cast iron columns flank the apparatus door and frame the corners of the storefront, while finely-detailed original wood trim surrounds the personnel door, side lights, and transom windows.

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the proposed Historic Chicago Firehouse, formerly known as Engine Company 42, be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse exemplifies the historic importance of the City of Chicago's commitment to fire protection as an important function of city government and represents the significant role of fire protection in providing for the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Chicago.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse bears witness to the growth and development of Chicago during the late nineteenth century as the City grew to become the United States' second largest city.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse is a significant example of the "Storefront"-style firehouse, an early and important design in the evolution of the neighborhood firehouse.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse reflects, through its overall design and materials, the days of horse-drawn fire equipment an important and early era in the evolution of the Chicago Fire Department.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse features high-quality materials and fine craftsmanship as evidenced by distinctive masonry work and fine wood and metal details which demonstrate the efforts of the Fire Department to be responsive to the surrounding neighborhood's architectural character.

Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District

Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse, together with the twelve Historic Chicago Firehouses (previously designated as Chicago Landmarks in 2003), collectively represent and express Chicago's commitment to neighborhood fire protection throughout Chicago's history.

- The (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse shares common attitudes toward design, form, siting, scale and massing with the previously-designated twelve Historic Chicago Firehouses that collectively demonstrate the evolution of this important building type.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

Overall the (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse at 228 W. Illinois St. retains excellent physical integrity, displaying through its siting, scale and design its historic relationship with its surrounding Near North Side neighborhood. The building retains its historic storefront and original details that impart a strong sense of its historic visual character—making it an unusual and exceptional example of an early firehouse.

Alterations at street level include the replacement of the sidelight windows and the personnel and apparatus doors. The window openings at the third-story level have been infilled with masonry. Finally, modifications to the masonry at the parapet level include the removal of the central corbelled brick knee-wall and the crenellated brickwork at the corners of the building.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Historic Chicago Firehouse known as the (former) Engine Company 42 firehouse, located at 228 W. Illinois St., the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines.

Selected Bibliography

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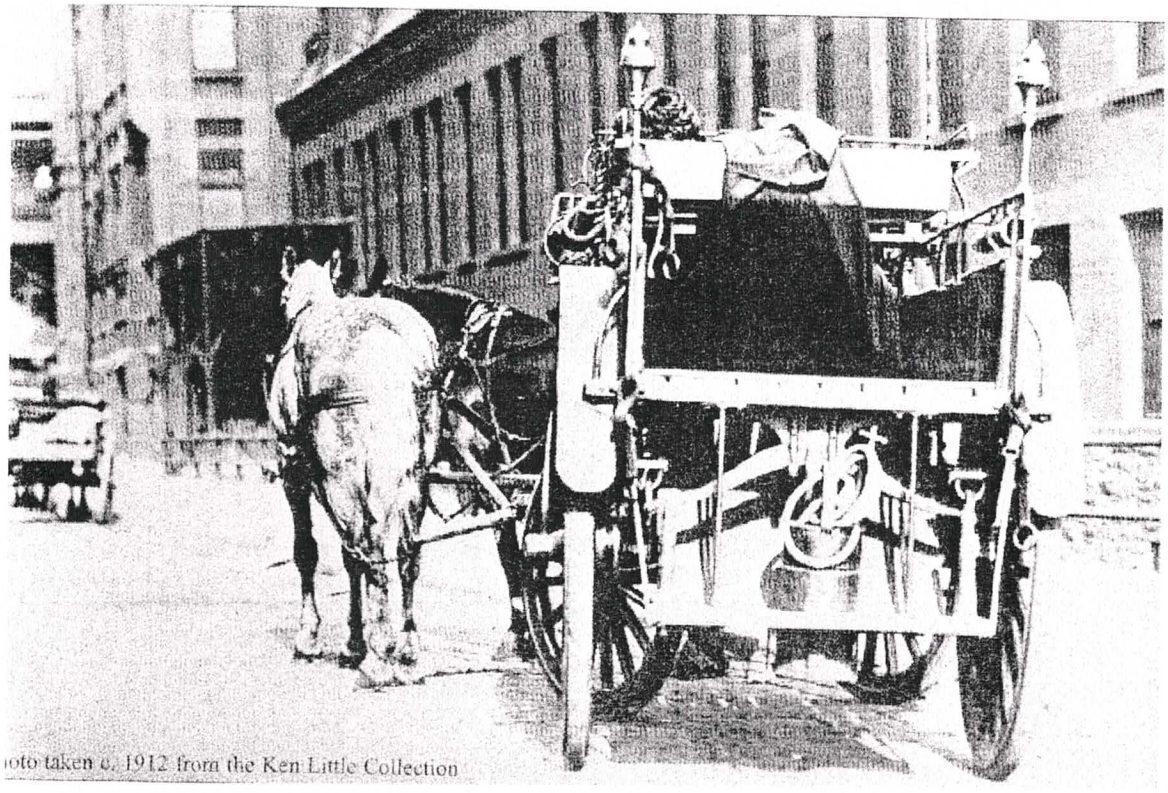

Engine 42's 1908 Racine "Double" (2-horse) Hose Wagon is seen on Kinzie Street (c. 1912) responding to a fire in their district.

Acknowledgements

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Illustrations
From Little, *The History of Chicago Firehouses*: pp. 3 and 9.
Department of Planning and Development, Landmarks Division: pp. 4 and 6.

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